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ABSTRACT

The high school experiences of gay young men, the management of these experiences, and the relationships of these experiences and their management with organizational and personal factors provide the focus of this study of a small, carefully selected sample of gay young men who attended public high schools in the state of Washington. An examination of personal and family contextual factors and organizational contextual factors that condition the way gay youth experience high school precedes an exploration of the way gay youth experience high school. Gay youth confront problematic situations in high school regarding the conflicts of knowing they are different and not wanting to be punished for this difference and of not being honest about their homosexuality. Gay youth manage these situations by deliberately engaging in acceptable heterosexual behavior, by disguising their sexual orientation by interpreting and presenting it in terms of a more socially acceptable orientation, and by identifying and befriending other gay youth in the school. The consequences of the high school experience on gay youth are: (1) a chronic sense of personal shame; (2) a conflict between alienation from the high school and alienation of the self; (3) an inability to participate spontaneously; (4) victimization; and (5) self-destructive behavior. (CK)

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HIGH SCHOOL GAY YOUTH: INVISIBLE DIVERSITY

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HIGH SCHOOL GAY YOUTH: INVISIBLE DIVERSITY

Introduction

A large sign over the entrance of the main office at a large comprehensive high school in the northwest reads:

> There is no place in John C. Fremont High School for anyone who promotes discrimination, tolerates its observed occurrence, or provides an environment in which discriminatory actions are ignored. Students with varied backgrounds, combined with a sound educational program, will promote a real appreciation of peoples' differences and similarities.

The sign carries a powerful message of the school's position on intolerance and discrimination and the school's position on promoting and valuing diversity. Although inclusive as the message of the sign is, Does it include all diverse groups? Likely not. Gay youth are probable among those not included. Here the term gay youth is taken to mean male high students who have a homosexual orientation and who will likely enter the gay community (Goodwin, 1989).

The term diversity, with reference to American public schools, has typically been associated with people who are a part of various identifiable cultural and subcultural categories, for example, racial and ethnic groups. Notably absent from the

*I would like to acknowledge Scott Thiemann, Educator, Outreach to Rural Youth, and Association of Gay and Lesbian Youth Advocates, Seattle, Washington; and Tom Martin, Campus Minister, Campus Christian Center, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington, for their important contributions to this study.

typical diversity discussion is the consideration of gay youth. In contrast to other groups, this category's existence has largely been denied and has with few exceptions remained invisible. In a few isolated school districts, programs and schools have been established to accommodate gay youth, for example, PROJECT 10, an educational and counseling program for gay youth in high schools in the Los Angeles School District, and Harvey Milke High School, a high school in the New York School District established for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth (Uribe & Harbeck, 1992). Gay youth have likely existed in American public high schools since their inception and will likely continue to exist. Additionally, this group has and will continue to cut across all cultural and subcultural groups as well as through economic levels within cultural and subcultural groups. Therefore, a discussion of diversity in public education is incomplete if the subject of gay youth is not included.

It is estimated that high school youth with a homosexual or bisexual orientation account for up to 10% of the population in public schools (Seattle Commission on Children and Youth, 1988; this figure is consistent with Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991). Hence, a high school of 1,000 students, there would be about 100 gay youths, 50 of whom would be young males. It is also estimated that 40% of the youth who drop out of public education and become "street children" in urban areas are gay, lesbian, or bisexual youth (Seattle Commission on Children and Youth, 1988). Additionally, because gay men of all ages are not infrequently the object of very serious hate crimes committed by young males

(Berrill, 1992), it is known with some certainty that gay youth continually experience a physically dangerous and emotionally uncertain environment (Berrill, 1992; Herek, 1991)). Hence, the numbers of gay youth and problems associated with gay youth in American public high schools are substantial, yet the numbers and problems of gay youth remain largely invisible to public educators. Not only does the group remain invisible, the existence of and problems associated with gay youth are largely denied by public school educators, particularly school administrators. Therefore, the inclusion of gay youth in discussions of diversity in American public high schools is warranted and absolutely necessary. As Pillard (1991) notes, "... gender-role flexibility might operate not as a deficit or handicap, but ... as a way of increasing the diversity of temperaments and behaviors within our species" (p. 43).

Purpose

This paper is part of a larger study. With respect to the larger study, there are two purposes, one narrow and the other broad. The narrow purpose is to investigate in detail the high school experiences, the management of these experiences, and the relationships of these experiences and their management with organizational and personal factors of a small, yet carefully selected sample of gay young men who attended public high schools in the state of Washington. And, the broad purpose is to develop the outlines of a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) relating the experiences and the management of the experiences of gay youth in American public schools with organizational factors

in the public high schools and with personal factors in the biographies of gay youth.

As part of the larger study, the particular purpose of this paper is to develop a framework for the initial analysis of field and other data through the review and integration of relevant literature, a limited analysis of field data, and the personal experiences of the author. The analytic framework which follows is consistent with the purposes of the larger study and has an organization theory perspective.

In this paper, first personal and family contextual factors and second organizational contextual factors which condition the way gay youth experience high school will be examined. Following the examination of personal and organizational contextual factors, the way gay youth experience high school will be considered. The problematic situations confronted by gay youth in their high school experience will then be discussed. After examining the problematic situations experienced by gay youth in high schools, the way in which gay youth manage these problematic situations will be presented. The framework concludes with an examination of the consequences of the management techniques employed by gay youth in high school.

Limitations

Among the limitations cited in the larger study, it is important to note one of these limitations in this paper. This limitation is concerned with the focus of the study on gay male youth and not including lesbian or bisexual youth. Due to the constraints of resources, access, and the gender of the principal

investigator, it was decided to limit this study to only gay male youth. Hence, the literature reviewed and the analytic framework developed are concerned primarily, however not exclusively, with gay male youth.

The Personal and Family Contexts

Gay youth have a unique personal and family background. Gay youth at a very early age know they are different. These children know they are sexually attracted to members of the same sex and know they have positive bodily experiences associated with these attractions. Also, identical with their non-gay peers, gay youth grow up believing that homosexuality is bad. They have at an early age internalized normative family and societal expectations that heterosexuality is natural, hence good, and that homosexuality is unnatural, hence bad if not evil (Goffman, 1963). Additionally, they have internalized the belief that homosexuals are not quite human, effeminate males and their presence among heterosexuals, particularly males, produces tension and uneasiness (Goffman, 1963).

Gay youth feel they have no one to turn to in their family to help them understand and reconcile their profound dilemma (Uribe & Harbeck, 1992). They do not see themselves as very different from their peers, other than their same sex attraction. The do not see themselves as particularly effeminate, and they may not even consider themselves to be "homosexual," yet they still know they are different. Gay youth begin to hide and mask their situation. With the onset of pre-adolescence, the dilemma becomes more concerning and stressful. During adolescence, the

situation becomes almost unbearable at times. Adding to the already stressful situation, gay youth recognize that they are violating the societal norms of personal honesty and integrity. They develop the concept of "living a lie" which adds further stress to an already very stressful situation.

Gay youth do not know where to turn to for help. They believe that if they confide in a family member, they will likely be ridiculed and punished (Uribe & Harbeck, 1992). Additionally, they are not old enough or experienced enough to be aware of other gay youths, the presence of a gay community, and various support organizations within and beyond the gay community.

The High School Organizational Context

The amount of time children and youth are compelled to attend school dominates their lives between the ages of five and seventeen years. Therefore, their experience in school as an organization is important to consider. How students experience large public comprehensive high schools as organizations can be understood in terms of two analytically separate yet related aspects of social organizations (Blau & Scott, 1962). These aspects are (1) the structure of the high school and (2) the shared beliefs and orientations held by administrators, teachers, staff members, and students. In the following discussion, first the organizational structure of the high school with respect to students will be considered, and second certain shared beliefs concerning human sexuality in general and adolescent sexuality in particular held by both staff and students will be presented.

Organizational Structure

The organizational structure and beliefs imbedded in the structure of the contemporary comprehensive American high school assume and are geared toward heterosexual youth. The high school with respect to students has both a formal (Charters, 1964) and an informal structure (Iannaccone, 1964). The overall organizational structure contains three important scheduled elements, the curriculum, the extra-curriculum, the breaks between and within the curriculum and extra-curriculum.

The formal structure largely takes its form in the established curriculum and the classes which deliver the curriculum. Here the primary relationship is between a teacher and a class of students. In classes the relationships between students and teachers is impersonal and hierarchically structured. Within the formal structure, student conduct is set forth in school and classroom rules which are established and maintained by administrators, teachers, and other staff members, yet guided by state statutes (Reed & Himmler, 1988). The informal structure of the high school is found before school and after, during breaks and lunch periods, within the extra-curriculum, and during classes when instruction is not taking place. The informal structure can be seen in cliques, friendship groups, and isolated students. Within cliques and friendship groups, the relationships among students is intimate and personal. Within the informal structure, student conduct is controlled by social norms which are established and maintained

by the students themselves, yet informed by and consistent with community values (Reed & Himmler, 1988).

Given the formal and informal structure of the contemporary American high school, students experience these structural aspects differentially. Although the official purposes of the high school are embodied in the curriculum, students largely experience the high school in terms of the extra-curriculum and the breaks within and between the curriculum and extra-curriculum. Within these two time structures, it is the informally structure relationships which students experience most vividly (Coleman, 1961; Cusick, 1973; Gordon, 1957). Students experience high school mainly in terms of highly positive and negative affective interpersonal relationships with other students, this is to say with their peers. For the most part, students experience very few informally structured relationships with adults (Waller, 1932).

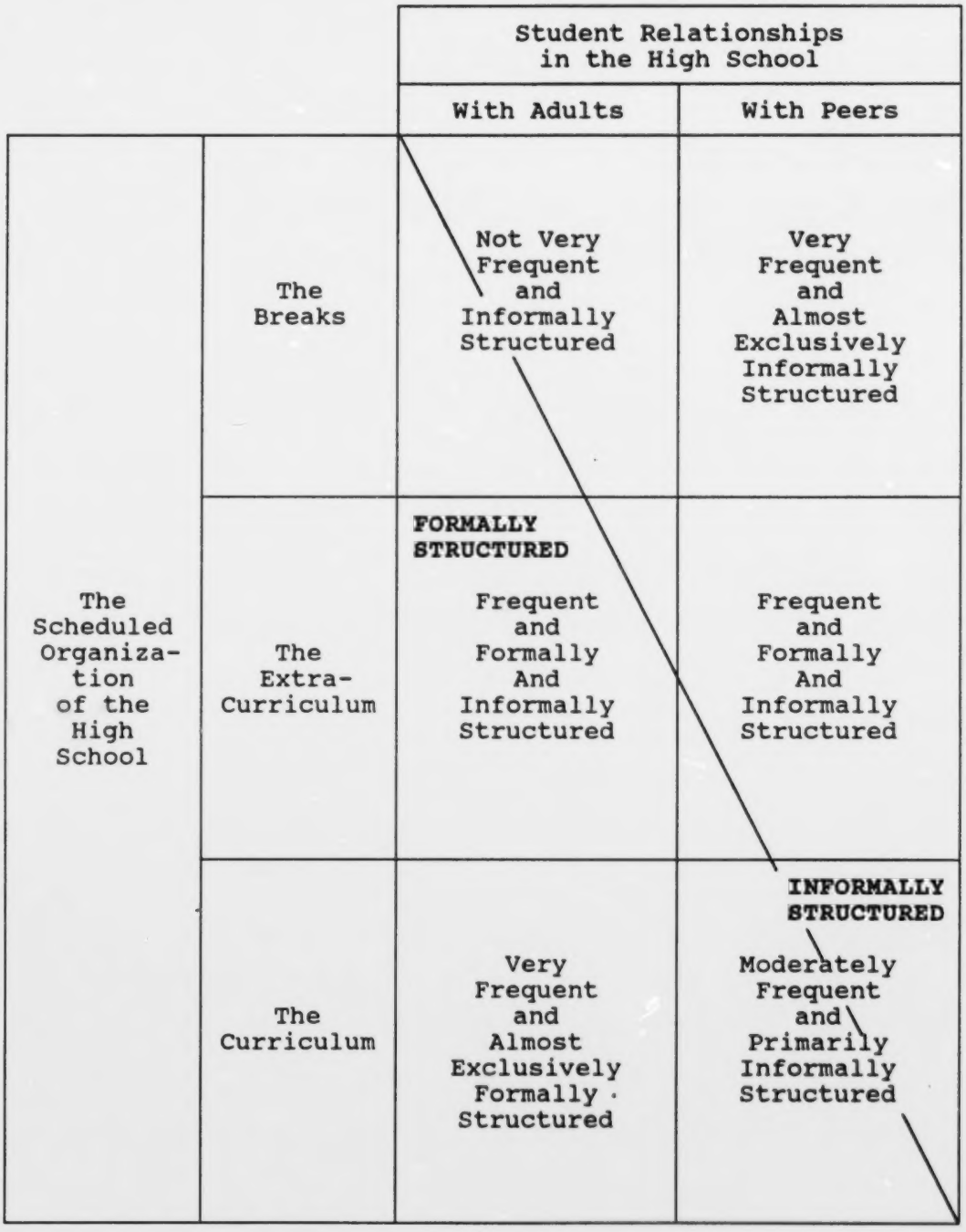
Figure 1 presents the character and intensity of student relationships in terms of the scheduled organization of the high school. The diagonal line cutting through the figure divides those relationships during scheduled times which tend to be formally structured and those which tend to be informally structured (Gordon, 1957).

Organizational Beliefs

Organizational beliefs are part and parcel of the organizational structure. Organizational beliefs are not the sum of the individual beliefs held by individual organizational members. Organizational beliefs are a collective phenomena and

Figure 1

The Intensity and Character of Organizational Structures in the High School with Respect to Students in the Scheduled Organization and Students' Relationships


Student Relationships in the High School
With Adults
With Peers
The Scheduled Organization of the High School
The Breaks
Not Very Frequent and Informally Structured
Very Frequent and Almost Exclusively Informally Structured
The Extra-Curriculum
FORMALLY STRUCTURED
Frequent and Formally And Informally Structured
Frequent and Formally And Informally Structured
The Curriculum
Very Frequent and Almost Exclusively Formally Structured
INFORMALLY STRUCTURED
Moderately Frequent and Primarily Informally Structured

in many important ways are considered to give different organizations their particular character. Organizational beliefs are the common value orientations held collectively by organizational members regarding what is right and good with respect to the organization and their relationship to the organization (Blau & Scott, 1962). A full analysis of the organizational beliefs of the contemporary American public high school would be a lengthy discussion. Because the concern here is with the experiences of gay youth in high school, only those organizational beliefs concerning adolescence and human sexuality will be considered.

Organizational Beliefs Regarding Human Sexuality

With respect to how gay youth experience high school as an organization, the organizational beliefs held more-or-less collectively by administrators, teachers, and other staff members are important to consider. The organizational beliefs have two aspects, one concerned with heterosexuality and the other concerned with homosexuality. The official belief of high schools regarding heterosexuality in general, albeit implicit, is that heterosexuality is <u>normal</u> (Uribe & Harbeck, 1992). Hence, heterosexuality is good and desirable, and children exhibiting heterosexual conduct should be encouraged and rewarded. The general embodiment of the heterosexual belief is the image of "a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports" (Goffman, 1963, p. 128). And, the specific high school embodiment of the

belief is the younger version of the general image. Typically, it is the image of the well proportioned high school male with good athletic ability, acceptable scholastic performance, and well developed social skills (Coleman, 1961).

The unofficial organizational belief regarding homosexuality is that homosexuality is abnormal. The term unofficial is used here because this belief is typically not formalized, although it is nonetheless pervasive. Hence, homosexuality is bad, and deviant, and children exhibiting homosexual conduct should be punished. The embodiment of this belief is the image of an effeminate, vain male who talks too much (Goffman, 1963, p. 39).

With respect to adolescent sexuality, educators believe that sexual orientation of pre-adolescents is largely undifferentiated and that during adolescence rapid cognitive and physical changes take place (Foucault, 1980; Opotow, 1992; Uribe & Harbeck, 1992). It is during these changes that sexual orientation becomes differentiated and fixed into appropriate gender sex role orientations (Waller, 1932). Educators believe that the differentiation and fixing of appropriate sex orientations is context dependent. Hence, the school environment is exceedingly important in establishing the appropriate heterosexual identities of children (Foucault, 1980). An appropriately heterosexual curriculum linked with an appropriate heterosexual extra-curriculum and staffed by carefully screened heterosexual personnel is essential. Furthermore, the organizational support of appropriate adult and student norms regarding the personal, group, and organizational incentives and rewards for heterosexual

conduct and disincentives and punishments for homosexual conduct is important. In essence, the official and unofficial organizational belief is that heterosexuality is the normal course of child development, but that its course can be disrupted or changed in a contaminated environment. One important potential source of contamination is the presence of homosexuality in the curriculum, extra-curriculum, and break times, in organizational and group norms, and in personally held values, as well as the presence of students and adults who represent themselves or are represented as homosexual. There is the strong and pervasive belief that homosexuality is a contagious disease and, hence, must not be allowed to contaminate the high school as an organization. Any hint of homosexuality must be eradicated. The emergence of AIDS has provided further support for this belief. In part, the belief that homosexuality is contagious is what is meant by the term homophobia (Sears, 1992) and what stands behind what is referred to as "school-sanctioned homophobia" (Uribe & Harbeck, 1992, p. 18).

The Sexualized Organizational Context

Although not generally recognized or acknowledged, the contemporary American high school presents itself as a highly sexualized organizational environment. The curriculum is an interpretation of state statues and, for the most part, is intendedly sexually neutral. Most courses in the high school curriculum are explicitly concerned with subject matter other than human sexuality. Notable exceptions include sex education units and courses, health classes, family living courses, and

similar curricular offerings. Community controversy in school districts is legendary regarding these courses and their course content. Although the subject of human sexuality is in most cases not explicitly part of the formal state mandated curriculum, implicitly the formal curriculum has strong heterosexual and anti-homosexual themes.

The design of the curriculum and assignment of students to classes is along gender lines with the expectation that gender will follow a heterosexual orientation. A normative symbolic representation of heterosexuality frequently occurs in curricular materials, texts, pictures, posters, music, plays, and student publications. Similar to the curriculum, the design of certain parts of the high school facility is along gender lines with the expectation that the sexual orientations of students will be heterosexual are commonplace; rest rooms and gymnasium locker rooms are examples. Hence, although the school curriculum is intendedly sexually neutral in most instances, the curriculum is implicitly heterosexual.

The implicit anti-homosexual theme in the curriculum is manifest through teacher certification and counselor training. Penalties can be meted out to teachers who represent themselves or are represented as homosexuals (Harbeck, 1992). Therefore, homosexual teachers disguise and hide any aspect of their homosexuality (Woods & Harbeck, 1992; Romanovsky, 1991). School counselors and teachers may regard adolescent homosexuality as a temporary adolescent condition and a treatable disease. The implicit anti-homosexual theme in the formal curriculum is also

manifest in its absence in the curriculum, typically even in those classes where sexuality is a legitimate topic of presentation and discussion. Except in very specific and rare places, the presentation of homosexuality as a reality is absent. If presented in the curriculum, homosexuality is presented in the context of a mild social problem yet a very serious personal problem. Hence, it can be concluded that the curriculum of the high school is implicitly yet strongly sexualized. In general, the curriculum is simultaneously and implicitly heterosexual and anti-homosexual.

Whereas student activity in the formal curriculum is structured to be primarily passive (Cusick, 1973), student activity in the extra-curriculum is structured to be active. In extracurricular activities, students are trained and coached to perform traditional adult roles, and these roles have a highly public and visible character. Athletic competitions, musical and drama productions, school newspaper and annual production, various team academic competitions, and a host of sanctioned social activities are examples of extracurricular activities in which students are expected to perform publicly and display adult or adult-like roles.

Consistent with typical community values, the extra-curriculum, in contrast to the curriculum, is explicitly heterosexual. Yet similar to the formal curriculum, the extra-curriculum is implicitly anti-homosexual. In extra-curricular activities, boys are expected to display the appropriate heterosexual roles of men, and girls are expected to play the

appropriate heterosexual roles of women. A sense of embarrassment arises in community members, parents, administrators, teachers, and other students when these roles are played out publicly by students as mere children. The implicit anti-homosexual theme becomes apparent when boys play out these roles in ways which boys are interpreted to be sissies, wousses, candy asses, fairies, fags, or other common terms associated with gay men. If this should occur, public humiliation is likely to follow. Public humiliation typically comes from peers, particularly male athletes, "the jocks" as they are known in high schools. When public humiliation occurs, typically professional school personnel do not engage in this activity; yet when they are aware of such activity, they do not halt the activity. However, male high school athletic coaches have reputations for engaging in harassment when boys, in their estimation, publicly engage in behavior stereotypically associated with male homosexuals.

During break times, including before and after school and lunch, the informal organization of the school is most apparent. Although for students, breaks are times for informality, they do have both formal and informal aspects. The formal aspect of breaks are implicitly heterosexual and implicitly anti-sexual. Although student conduct during breaks is less rigidly controlled than during curricular and extracurricular times, the limits of student conduct during breaks are codified in what are known as <u>school rules</u>. These relatively simple and few rules prescribe the normative relationships of students to the school as an

organization and the relationships of students to each other (Bidwell, 1970). It is high school vice principals who typically supervise scheduled breaks and enforce school rules.

Some of these rules are explicitly heterosexual in character. For example, a rule which allows students to hold hands but not to kiss each other in school corridors both presumes and prescribes heterosexual relationships among students. Although there are typically not explicit anti-homosexual rules, student activities which may be construed by break supervisors as minimally symbolizing homosexuality is immediately negatively sanctioned. In the 1960s, the long hair of high school boys angered school administrators because in their eyes long hair on boys symbolized femininity and hinted at homosexuality. Numerous court cases followed the school's attempt to enforce hair codes for high school boys (Flygare, 1975). And, in the 1980s when some high school boys began to wear a single earring, this also angered school administrators for the same reasons. For example, a high school administrator during a break approached a boy with and earring. Clutching the earring between his thumb and forefinger, the administrator said to the boy, "You fag, you fag, you fag!"

It is within the formal structure of the breaks, that the school becomes explicitly heterosexual and explicitly anti-homosexual. During the breaks students have very few relationships with adults and have almost exclusively informally structured relationship with other students. It is during the

breaks when the "adolescent society" (Coleman, 1961) becomes most apparent and explicit.

The adolescent society has it own norms which are largely not under the control of school officials. These norms prescribe student social conduct within and between groups and between individual students. Many of these norms involve the appropriate gender roles and the application of the norms under various circumstances for boys or girls. Examples include gender appropriate grooming, dress, personal posture and carriage, sitting and relaxing positions, mannerisms, and ways to carry various articles and items. Personal sexuality and its display as well as sexual relationships between students both in and out of the high school are also important social norms held by students. Typically, these norms assume and prescribe appropriate heterosexual relationships between and among students. Two examples include who can approach whom, and under what conditions, to initiate intimate relationships, i.e. dates, and the appropriate forms and public displays of bodily contact between boys and girls, e.g. holding hands, embraces, and kissing. Students who conform with these types of norms are rewarded with social status by the students themselves.

Also among the norms concerned with sexuality, are norms against homosexual conduct particularly that which might be exhibited by boys. Boys who are perceived to exhibit the slightest hint of any stereotypical homosexual behavior are dismissed by their peers as sissies, wousses, and candy asses. Boys who may display what might be interpreted as stronger signs

of stereotypical homosexual behavior are regarded by their peers as fairies, queers, and fags. Any high school boy perceived to exhibit any stereotypical behavior associate with homosexual males is subject to verbal abuse by other boys which may also be accompanied by physical assaults. Typically these assaults are done out of view of school officials, but when they are in view, school officials typically neither stop the assaults nor punish the offenders.

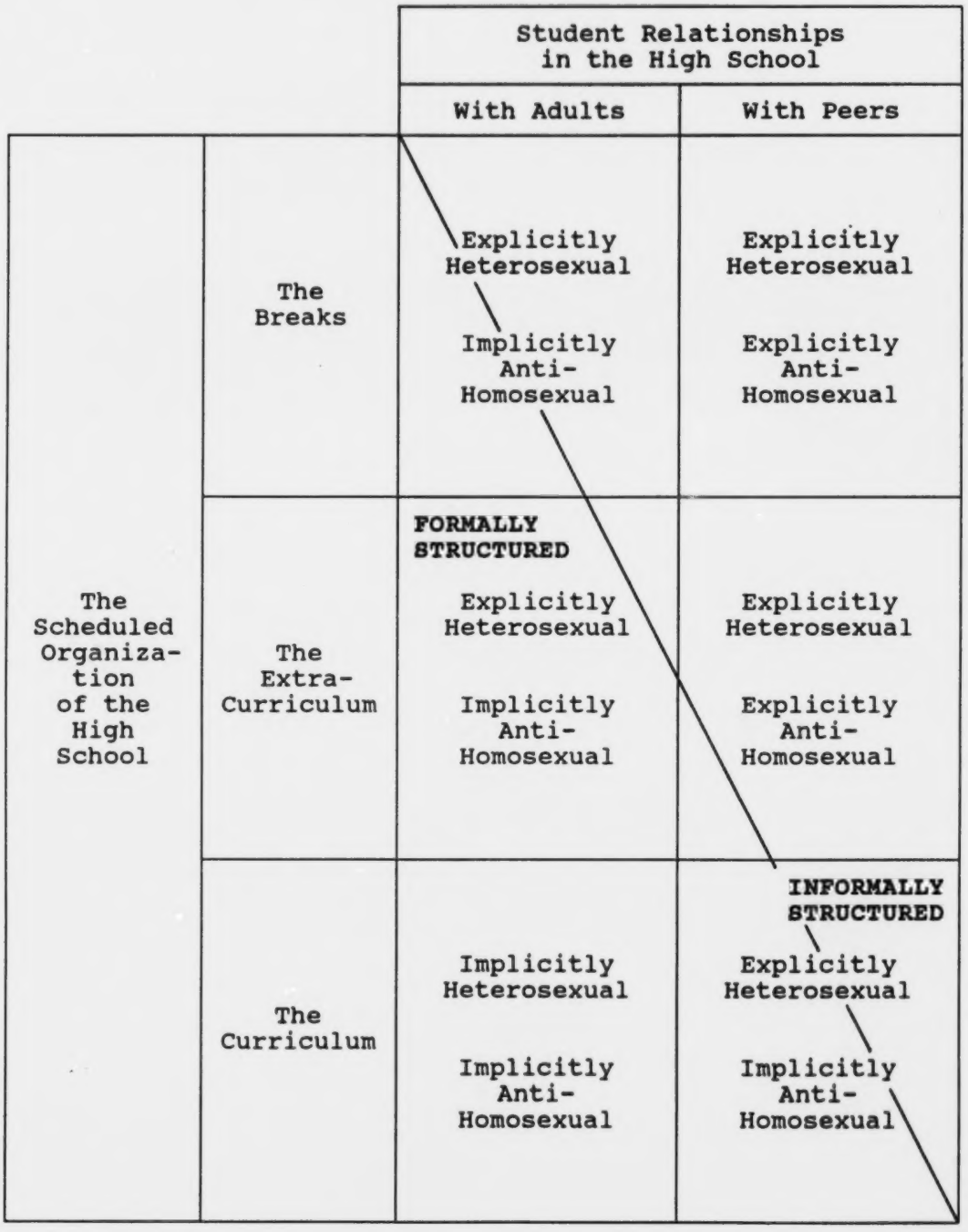
For gay youth it is the scheduled breaks which are the most troublesome because they are the center of the school experience for students, and it is during breaks where the school is most emphatically and explicitly anti-homosexualized.

The high school as an organization presents a highly sexualized environment (Shakeshaft, 1992) for students. The character of the sexualized organizational context is presented in Figure 2. Although most students and staff experience this environment as naturally given and non-problematic to the extent that the high school's environment is not experienced as sexualized in any particular way, gay youth do not experienced the high school in this same way. Gay youth learn from direct experience, "taunts, teasing, ostracism, and fights," that the high school is most certainly anti-homosexual (Goffman, 1963, p. 33).

The High School Experience

Almost all high school students experience the high school organization as social, rather than academic (Coleman, 1961;

Figure 2
The Sexualized Organizational Context of the High School which Conditions the School Experience of Gay Youth



Cusick, 1973; Gordon, 1957). The students experience the social organization with respect to their peers rather than adults, including administrators, teachers, and other staff members. It is primarily through the informally structured relationships during breaks, extracurricular activities, and even during the scheduled curriculum that students experience the social, rather than the academic, organization of the high school (Cusick, 1973). The social organization is experienced primarily through membership in small friendship and interest related groups and participating in the activities of these groups.

With respect to the sexualized character of the organization as noted earlier, students do not experience it as particularly sexualized. The strongly heterosexualized context of the high school is not experienced by most students as anything particularly significant because it is consistent and harmonious with their personal backgrounds and the larger community context of the high school. The heterosexualized character of the school is experienced as given and non-problematic.

Gay youth in most ways experience the high school organization in much the same way as non-gay youth. This is to say that gay youth experience the school as a social organization through their affiliation with small groups and individual friendships and through participating in activities associated with these relationships. Similar to other students, gay youth do not experience the high school as a particular hetero-sexualized environment. However, gay youth experience the pervasive anti-homosexual character of the high school as an

important and powerful (Mitchell & Spady, 1983) aspect of their high school experience. This organizational power is translated into experiencing the high school as uncertain and unpredictable. Much of the time gay youth experience high school as being alone in a hostile environment.

Problematic Situations

For gay youth, the high school experience provides two important problematic situations (Becker, 1970). First, consistent with societal norms and reinforced by the social organization of the high school, gay youth believe that heterosexuality is normal and should be rewarded and that homosexuality is not normal and should be punished. However, they know they are different because they have same sex attractions, and they know they do not want to be punished because they are different. And, second, consistent with societal norms, gay youth have internalized the belief in personal honesty and integrity. However, in order to avoid the punishments in which they themselves believe regarding homosexuality, they are not honest about their homosexuality. Dealing and coping with this double pronged problematic situation makes high school life difficult at best for most gay youth.

Managing the High School Experience

Regarding the first problematic situation, gay youth learn and employ "techniques of information control" (Goffman, 1963, p. 91) to order to simultaneously conceal and hide (Uribe & Harbeck, 1992) their feelings of same sex attraction and any hint of stereotypical behavior associated with male homosexuals. The

technique by which they control information about themselves is learning to "pass" (Goffman, 1963). Passing is "the management of undisclosed discrediting information about self" (Goffman, 1963, p. 43). The term gay youth use for passing is "playing it straight." Speaking in general of people who can be seriously discredited in social situations, Goffman (1963, p. 74) notes that, "Because of the great rewards in being considered normal, almost all persons who are in a position to pass will do so on some occasion by intent." In the case of gay youth, passing provides rewards for being considered "normal" and also provides a means for avoiding punishments for being considered seriously abnormal, this is to say being regarded as deviant (Becker, 1963). Passing, however, does not protect gay youth against the personal psychological effects of continuous lying.

There are at least four ways in which gay youth pass or attempt to pass in high school. First, they "conceal or obliterate signs" (Goffman, 1963, p. 92) that have come to be associated with stereotypical male homosexual behavior. For example, gay youth make continued efforts to avoid posture, movements, and mannerisms associated with homosexual mem. Along with concealment, gay youth employ "disidentifiers" (Goffman, 1963, p. 93). Gay youth may deliberately engage in acceptable heterosexual behavior, for example having a steady girl friend, to disidentify themselves as homosexual. A second way in which gay youth pass is by disguising their sexual orientation by interpreting and presenting it in terms of a more socially acceptable orientation. For example, gay youth may avoid

athletics because of fear of uncontrollable body responses in shower rooms, but explain their nonparticipation in terms of lack of interest and talent. Third, gay youth manage their social distance with other students and adults in the school very carefully. Close intimate relationships require reciprocal self-disclosures. And finally, gay youth manage their physical distance with peers carefully so as not to be seen and/or encountered by particular students or groups of students during the school day. Gay youth know when, where, and by whom they will likely be harassed. Hence, they deliberately plan their school day in order to avoid potentially threatening encounters.

Concerning information control and passing, Goffman (1963) notes, "A key concept here is the daily round, for it is the daily round that links the individual to his several social situations" (p. 91). In his daily rounds, the gay youth must be highly sensitive to the contingencies he faces during the high school day in managing information about himself. This means that the gay youth must be constantly vigilant and carefully control his spontaneity during the school day.

Regarding the second problematic situation, gay youth, in their terms, "live a lie." This situation produces guilt and anxiety. They attempt to manage this situation in four ways. First, gay youth learn to live, albeit stressful, with a continuous sense of quilt and a feeling of anxiety. Secondly, they manage their social distance with peers and adults carefully so as not to develop relationships which require them to explicitly lie. A third way in which gay youth attempt to manage

guilt and anxiety is by identifying and befriending other gay youths in the school. In these occasional friendships, trust can be established and disclosure can be accomplished. This personal disclosure provides a small sense of relief from the perennial guilt and anxiety. However, these intimate relationships can lead to betrayal and blackmail. And, a fourth way in which gay youth attempt to manage guilt and anxiety is by seeking and finding the support of an adult in the high school. On seemingly rare occasions, gay youth are able to make these connections and develop such relationships.

Consequences of the High School Experience

The way gay youth experience high school, coupled with needs to tightly control personal information about themselves, have at least four important consequences for their lives. First, the uncertainty and sometimes hostile conditions of the high school and family linked with the needs for continual passing and lying, produce in gay youth a chronic sense of personal shame (Mitchell & Spady, 1983). Concerning a person who feels the continual need to pass, Goffman (1963, p. 87) notes, "... it is assumed that he must necessarily pay a great psychological price, a very high level of anxiety, in living a life that can be collapsed at any moment." Goffman's observations holds true for gay youth.

Second, as gay youth participate in and manage their high school experience, they are continually torn between alienation from the high school and alienation of self. In this regard, Goffman (1963, p. 87) states, "... it is often assumed, and with evidence, that the passer will be torn between two attachments.

He will feel some alienation from his new 'group,' for he is unlikely to be able to identify fully with their attitude to what he knows he can be shown to be. And presumably he will suffer feelings of disloyalty and self-contempt when he cannot take action against 'offensive' remarks made by members of the category he is passing into against the category he is passing out of--especially when he himself finds it dangerous to refrain from joining in this vilification." Gay youth frequently find themselves in situations where gay men are the brunt of jokes, held up as objects of ridicule, and are otherwise characterized in exceedingly unfavorable ways. Being a party to these conversations makes gay youth implicitly a part of these groups; yet in these groups gay youth cannot attain full membership; However, gay youth at the same time cannot explicitly exclude themselves because of fear of being ostracized.

Third, gay youth cannot participate in high school as spontaneously as most other students. They must self-consciously and continually monitor and manage their conduct as well as continually monitor the conduct of others around them. In this regard, Goffman (1963, p. 88) remarks, "... it seems to be assumed, and apparently correctly, that he who passes will have to be alive to aspects of the social situation which others treat as uncalculated and unattended. What are unthinking routines for normals can become management problems for the discreditable."

Participation in high school without spontaneity occurs when gay youth disqualify themselves from certain situations and activities in which participation is desired and from which

considerable could be learned, for example boys' athletics. In these situations, gay youth disqualify themselves because they fear that they will not be able to pass satisfactorily and/or they fear that they will self-disclose if they participate spontaneously and uninhibitedly. In these instances gay youth do not gain the experience others gain and are publicly awkward when they attempt to participate. Their awkwardness in such activities gives further testimony to themselves, and they believe to others, that they might be or are gay.

A fourth consequence of the way gay youth experience high school and their need to tightly control personal information about themselves is concerned with gay youth being easy victims of "wise" (Goffman, 1963) gay adult males. Because the high school largely withholds knowledge of homosexuality, gay youth have neither much information regarding homosexuality nor have authentic adult role models with whom they can relate to become knowledgeable of the mature adult gay community. Hence, gay youth can be victims of predatory gay men who are sophisticated in intercepting passing activities of gay youth.

A final possible consequence of the high school experience and other life experiences of gay youth is their engagement in self-destructive behavior. These behaviors include engaging in unsafe sexual practice, excessively using alcohol and other drugs, and committing suicide (Gonsiorek & Rudolph, 1991; Uribe & Harbeck, 1992).

A Concluding Note

Beginning in the 1950s, equity began to be an important value in American high schools. Until fairly recently, the accomplishment of equity has been through efforts of stressing similarity and uniformity. In the 1990s equity is being attempted to be achieved through emphasis on diversity and variety. As with other diverse groups which have been recognized and which have been or are being attempted to be incorporated into the fabric of the American public high school, gay youth are a real and pervasive group, yet the group largely remains invisible. It is important for professional educators to recognized the sexualized character--exclusively heterosexual and emphatically anti-homosexual--of the contemporary American high school. It is also important for public educators to recognized that there are and will continue to be gay youth in high schools, and that in most high schools gay youth experience school painfully alone and may engage in self-destructive behavior. It is also important for professional educations to recognize that in some urban high schools a few gay youths are "coming out" and in time will seek recognition as have heterosexual groups. It will not be without struggle and conflict that this group is recognized, made visible, incorporated, and allowed to be a legitimate and dignified group.

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